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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 000182

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2015
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [KS](#)
SUBJECT: ROK STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE OF U.S. POSITION ON IRAN'S
NUCLEAR PROGRAM

REF: A. SECSTATE 6236
[1](#)B. SEOUL 166

Classified By: A/POL SUNG Y. KIM. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) In response to ref A demarche urging support for efforts to refer Iran to the Security Council for its violation of its commitments under the Paris Agreement, ROK officials expressed strong support for efforts to bring Iran back into compliance with its IAEA obligations during January 13 meeting. Separately, a MOFAT official reported that during a January 11 meeting with visiting Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Safari, FM Ban expressed deep regret over Iran's decision to resume its nuclear activities. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On January 13, poloff briefed ref a points, which requested support for the referral of Iran to the Security Council, to Kwon Hee-seog, Director of the Disarmament and Nonproliferation Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT). After reviewing the points, Kwon noted that MOFAT was familiar with the U.S. position on Iran's recent decision to unseal nuclear reprocessing facilities, citing a recent discussion on the Iranian nuclear program between Under Secretary Joseph and Deputy Foreign Minister Chun Young-Woo. Kwon stated that like the United States, the ROK considered the recent unsealing of nuclear reprocessing facilities a very troubling development and hoped that the issue could be solved quickly through diplomatic, peaceful means. Kwon added that the ROK strongly supported adherence to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) rules by all countries, including North Korea and Iran, as well as international efforts to uphold the principles of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to prevent the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

[1](#)3. (C) Noting press reports that senior envoys from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, China, and Russia planned to meet on January 16 in London in an effort to raise pressure on Iran, Kwon expressed support for efforts to

convince China and Russia to increase their diplomatic efforts to bring Iran into compliance with IAEA obligations and regulations. For its part, the ROK had also encouraged Iranian compliance with IAEA obligations, said Kwon, noting ref b meeting on January 11 between Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon and Iranian Vice Foreign Minister Mehdi Safari, during which Ban urged Iranian cooperation with the EU3 and encouraged Iran to open its nuclear programs to international inspections.

¶4. (C) In a separate meeting to discuss Iranian Vice Foreign Minister Safari's trip to Seoul, Ahn Seong-doo, Director of the Middle East Division at MOFAT, told poloff on January 12 that in meetings with ROK officials Safari had explained Iran's nuclear research and development program and sought South Korean "understanding." During a 40-minute meeting with Foreign Minister Ban and a 50-minute meeting with 1st Vice Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan, VFM Safari emphasized the domestic pressures his government was under to continue nuclear development for technological and energy purposes and not nuclear weapon development. VFM Safari insisted that as a member of the NPT and IAEA, Tehran had the right to conduct nuclear development. Prior to his arrival in Seoul on January 10, the Iranian Industry Ministry on January 8 had announced that restrictions on South Korean and British exports were being lifted. Ahn said VFM Safari did not repeat the sanction threat Tehran made in October to visiting South Korean 2nd Vice Minister Lee Kyu-hyung, but Safari underlined that Tehran saw a connection between international political issues and bilateral economic relations, a point he reportedly also made in meetings with South Korean lawmakers and business officials in Seoul.

¶5. (C) Foreign Minister Ban and Vice Foreign Minister Yu had registered "deep regret" with Safari over the resumption of Iran's nuclear activities, said Ahn, and reiterated Seoul's hopes for a diplomatic resolution of the issue that would avoid reference to the Security Council. ROKG officials had also pressed Safari to delink the nuclear issue from bilateral economic relations. Speaking personally, Ahn said the ROK would join with the international community if it decided to refer Iran to the Security Council.

VERSHBOW